

## **Investigating the experiences of Black, Minority Ethnic Teacher Educators in England and Australia: invisible and hypervisible identities.**

### **Abstract**

This article reports on a qualitative study that investigated the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) teacher educators working within the predominantly white space of the academy. In order to examine the professional experiences of 27 English and Australian academics, interview data were collected from academics with various levels of experience working in a range of institutions. We assembled a multidimensional theoretical frame that draws on critical race theory, whiteness and Puwar's concept of the Space Invader. Findings suggest that the participants in both national contexts felt marginalised, and despite the existence of policies to promote equality of opportunity, they encountered subtle everyday racism which was manifested through microaggressions that contributed to their construction as simultaneously hypervisible and invisible, and as outsiders to the academy. Vulnerability, insecurity and precariousness was generated through the participants' positioning as space invaders, not only within their faculties or schools of education, but more widely within their university, and in schools where their students are placed for practicum. This vulnerability was also borne from surveillance by students and managers. We conclude the paper by arguing the need to disrupt the everyday racism experienced by BME teacher educators through institutional monitoring of equality policy outcomes, structured career support and mentoring.

**Keywords:** Black minority ethnic, teacher educators, racism, micro-aggression, whiteness, hypervisibility, invisibility

### **Introduction**

In many places in the world, university academics are drawn from the dominant cultural and racial majority and are not reflective of the racial cultural diversity present in the student cohorts they teach. For example, in England in 2011/12, 7.7% of academics are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds while 92.3% are White and from the dominant cultural group (Higher education Statistical Agency, 2014). These figures pertaining to academics in general are likely to vary across disciplines and faculties. In the case of academics working in faculties and schools of education in the UK and Australia, there are no nationally available data. This information is held within individual institutions, and difficult to access. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of academics in faculties and schools of education are white and from the hegemonic cultural majority. One of the reasons for this is that most teacher educators<sup>1</sup> are former teachers, a profession that is well accepted as being white and representative of the cultural majority (DfE, 2014).

Notwithstanding the complexities inherent in the term 'white' and the multitudes of identities that comprise 'white', we suggest that a teacher educator workforce that is predominantly white and drawn from the dominant cultural majority is potentially of concern. Teacher education

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term teacher educator from this point on to refer to academics who contribute in general to the education of prospective teachers

curriculum that is developed by, and taught entirely by academics from the dominant cultural majority, is likely to reflect the cultural values, priorities and practices of that group. This has implications for the preparation of teachers for culturally and racially diverse pupils whose educational needs are frequently not met by an education system that serves the interests of the dominant white majority. In some cases, racially and culturally diverse pupils are marginalised by schooling practices, and social inequality is simply perpetuated (Gillborn, 2008). Disrupting these practices of exclusion can be effectively done by teachers who are grounded in culturally responsive practice and who can also speak from their experience as racially and culturally diverse pupils. In turn, those who teach the teachers need to be able to help prospective teachers identify and critique dominant beliefs and values as well as the discourses in which they are personally and professionally embedded. A racially and culturally diverse population of teacher educators potentially brings different perspectives to this task. These perspectives present an alternative form of agency developed through personal experiences as learners and education professionals. Furthermore, culturally and racially diverse teacher educators could be seen to be successful role models for all student teachers. Their presence within the academy, at the front of the lecture hall engaged in developing the knowledge of future teachers, not only signals the success of that individual, it reinforces as legitimate their knowledge and skills. It also underscores the need to diversify the teaching workforce in schools and universities and contributes to broadening prospective teachers' understanding of learning within diverse communities.

In general, there has been relatively little research into the professional experiences of culturally and racially diverse academics. A recent study investigating the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) academics across all disciplines concluded that minority staff are more likely than white academics to leave the UK to pursue their careers abroad (Equality Challenge Unit 2015). They do so in order to gain promotion and/or permanent contracts, and because they believe there is a lack of focus on race equality in the UK. Similarly, the BME respondents in research conducted by Bhopal and Jackson (2013) reported that BME academics lacked opportunity to seek and gain promotion in comparison to their white peers. Although there has been a growing interest in the nature of teacher educators as a professional group, their work histories prior to joining academe and their experiences within schools and faculties of education, both as researchers and practitioners (Mayer, Mitchell, Santoro & White, 2011; Murray, Swennen and Shagrir, 2008), there is virtually no research that has investigated the parallel experiences of culturally and racially diverse teacher educators.

In light of this limited research, and informed by the experiences of both authors who are teacher educators, one of whom is a BME teacher educator, we designed a study that would enable us to investigate the professional experiences of BME<sup>2</sup> teacher educators. Specifically, we wanted to investigate how their cultural knowledge is valued and drawn upon in teacher education curriculum and practice; whether they are racialised within practice and policies of teacher education, and in what ways this is reflected in their career aspirations, career progression and their relationships with colleagues and students.

In what follows, we provide an overview of the study on which this paper reports. We then present findings and discussion, highlighting how this group of academics was simultaneously visible and invisible, marginalised and subjected to daily microaggressions within the

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<sup>2</sup> BME is commonly used in the UK. In the interests of consistency in this paper, we use the term to also refer to the Australian participants.

liberal white space of the academy, even after a considerable number of years of tenure. Yet, whilst some wanted to share their experiences, others were hesitant, requiring reassurance that they would not be identifiable. In hindsight, we feel their concern reflected the vulnerability they felt due to their hypervisibility within academe, and that being recognised by colleagues would lead to even greater surveillance of their performance within their institutions.

## The Study

After obtaining ethical approval the study collected in-depth qualitative interview data from twenty-seven BME academics from education faculties and schools of education in Australian and English universities. These contexts are marked by their similarity and differences—both societies are culturally diverse but have teaching professions and teacher educator professions generally characterised by cultural and racial homogeneity. In essence, we were curious to understand the similarities and differences between the sites and to ascertain how race and ethnicity shaped these academics' experiences.

The participants were recruited through professional contacts with other teacher educators, and approached via email. The 15 English academics were mostly English born, but from a range of backgrounds including Asian (2), Black Caribbean (8), Black Mixed heritage (3); Mixed Chinese/Philippino (1); Mixed other (1). There were 3 males and 12 females, one of whom was a senior academic manager in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The rest were Senior Lecturers. Four of the participants were in Russell group<sup>3</sup> universities, the remainder (11) were in post 1992, or newer universities. Ten of the 15 participants were based in universities in London. All had been teachers in primary, secondary or Further Education. Their experience as teacher educators ranged from 4-21 years. The 12 Australian academics were from a range of universities, including the prestigious GO8<sup>4</sup>, newer technical universities and regional universities. All were immigrants and had been in Australia for periods of time ranging from 2 years to 27 years, with most having immigrated between 5-7 years ago. All had been teachers in their countries of origin and some had also been academics. Eleven were lecturers, one was a senior lecturer.

The scope of this paper allows us to use only a selection of available data. While we have drawn on the most salient interview data from 11 academics across the 2 national sites, their views are representative of the larger cohort. Information about each participant appears in Table 1.

Australian Participants			
Pseudo-nym	Background	University	Experience

<sup>3</sup> These are 24 of the most prestigious universities in the UK internationally recognised for research excellence and outstanding academic achievement.

<sup>4</sup> GO8 is an acronym for Group of Eight, and similar to those in the Russell group of universities in the UK, these are universities which are well established and internationally recognised. Other types of universities are regional universities located in towns of less than 250,000 people, technological universities and newer universities established in the 1960s/70s .

Mei	South East Asia	Regional university	Lecturer level, 3 years in Australia, previous experience as an academic
Abel	Africa	Go8 university	Lecturer level, 4 years in Australia, previous experience as an academic
Bella	South Pacific	Go8 university	Lecturer level, 1 year in Australia
Hua	South East Asia	New university	Senior lecturer, 3 years in Australia, previous experience as an academic
Isaac	Africa	Regional university	Lecturer level, 3 years in Australia
English Participants			
Jane	Black Caribbean	Russell Group	Lecturer, 17 years in teacher education
James	Black Caribbean/White	Russell Group	Lecturer 12 years teaching in higher education/teacher education
Jade	Black Caribbean	Post1992 university	Senior Lecturer, 21 years in teacher education, 7 of which have been in a university
Jenny	Black	Russell Group	Lecturer, 14 years in teacher education
Joanne	Black Caribbean	Russell Group	Lecturer, 6 years in teacher education
Jill	Black Caribbean	Russell Group	Senior academic manager, 13 years in teacher education

In-depth semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted with each of the participants and later transcribed for analysis. The interviews elicited information from the participants about their professional experiences, and in particular, their pathway and transition into academe, the nature of their work in regard to curriculum development and pedagogy, their professional relationships and their career progression and aspirations.

We used a thematic approach to data analysis. Interview transcripts were read and re-read by the researchers who looked for patterns and repetitions directly related to the research foci such as: reasons for becoming an academic; transitions into academe; career progression; professional relationships, drawing on cultural knowledge to develop curriculum as well as silences and omissions. The themes were further organised into sub-themes and similarities and contradictions were identified across the data. While the Australian participants were immigrants, and the English academics were generally born in the UK and from established ethnic communities, the range of experiences across the two national contexts revealed a surprising degree of similarity. In this paper, we present data that highlights how the participants were simultaneously invisible and hypervisible with regard to their professional knowledge and standing.

We do not intend to generalise from the findings of this study. However, the nature of the experiences of these teacher education academics is noteworthy and may resonate with researchers and academics in similar contexts.

### **Theoretical Frames**

In order to examine our participants' experiences and their sense of belonging (or not) within the academy, we assembled a multidimensional theoretical frame. Thus, we have drawn on a number of theoretical lenses including Critical Race Theory (CRT) which asserts that racism is ever present, is more than acts of violence, hatred or name calling, but is also prevalent through inaction, omission or deletion, exclusion or apparent innocent, polite inclusion that fails to acknowledge the racialised experiences of BME or White people (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009). Gillborn (2008, p.7) calls these acts 'the hidden operations of power'. They are also what Huber and Solorzano call micro-aggressions, "a form of everyday racism used to keep those at the racial margins in their place" (2015, p.298). Micro-aggressions include verbal or non-verbal attacks directed at BME people which are subtle and unconscious, verbal or non-verbal assaults which intersect with the BME person's gender, class, sexuality, language, accent, or name. They are 'cumulative assaults that take a psychological, physiological and academic toll on people of color' (Huber and Solorzano 2015, p.298). Micro-aggressions can take the form of microinsults 'characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. [they can be] subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient of color' (Sue et al 2007, p.274). Micro-aggressions can also be in the form of microinvalidations, that is, 'communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color' (Sue et al, 2007, p.274).

Underpinning the existence and operation of everyday racism as well as structural racism, is Whiteness, a social, political and cultural construct. White is a racialised and advantaged identity which has developed over time through colonisation and the subjugation of the racialised 'Other' (Bonnett, 2000, Dyer, 1997). It privileges those who are White and

maintains the interest of White groups (Picower, 2009). According to Yoon, 'Whiteness is an iterative process, it is socially, historically and culturally constructed in social structures, ideology and individual actions' (2012, p.589). Frankenberg (2009, p.519) asserts that whiteness is an advantaged standpoint from which others are observed; it is 'unnamed and unmarked'. Over time, it has not only come to occupy and represent a position of privilege and power, it has silently and invisibly constituted the 'norm'.

We also draw on the seminal work of Puwar (2004) and the notion of the 'space invader' because it adeptly encapsulates the notion of a body out of place. Puwar (2004) suggests the space invader is a body that does not fit the institutional space in which it appears and inhabits. Ahmed (2007) further develops this concept, providing a theoretical bridge to whiteness. She suggests (2007, p.156-157) that, 'spaces acquire the shape of the bodies which inhabit them', noting that they also 'acquire the 'skin' of the bodies that inhabit them'. The space of academe is a space largely occupied by white middle class intellectuals. Thus, they inhabit the space which is defined as the university, and in turn, the university as a space, is defined by those who inhabit it. This mutual re-inscription of space determines the nature of that space, who belongs and who may reside within it. People who normally inhabit the space representing the 'somatic norm' do a 'double-take', appearing disoriented by the 'space invader' whose presence may be perceived as trespass, or an attempt to re-inscribe the space. Thus, as Ahmed (2007, p.159) notes, this 'makes a familiar space strange'. The mere act of the double-take reinforces that the bodies normally inhabiting that space, rightfully belong there. A BME space invader 'jolts the worldview' (Puwar 2004, p.43) and so reconfirms the whiteness of that space. Indeed, Ahmed (2007, p.160) suggests that, 'whiteness becomes a social and bodily orientation...some bodies will be more at home in a world orientated around whiteness'. 'Whiteness could be described as an ongoing and unfinished history which orientates bodies in specific directions, how they 'take up' space, and what they 'can do' (Ahmed 2007, p.149). Whiteness is invisible to those who are white, a taken-for-granted norm which makes 'non-white bodies feel uncomfortable, exposed, visible, different' (Ahmed 2007, p.157) when they inhabit spaces in which they are cast as the 'Other' (Matias and Zembylas 2014, Edgeworth 2015).

## **Findings: Invisible and Hypervisible Academics**

The academics from both Australia and England felt they were positioned as 'outsiders' in the academy and most reported experiencing complex and subtle forms of racism from colleagues and students. Such racism was expressed in the form of microaggressions that contributed to them feeling professionally incompetent. Many felt surveilled, under scrutiny, and therefore, hypervisible to colleagues, students and members of management. For example, both Hua and Mei were often criticized, via anonymous student evaluations conducted at the end of the semester, for their English language competence. These on-line evaluations were distributed by central administration, analysed and the results then passed onto the Head of Department. Thus, as Mei said, she often felt 'under the spotlight' because students reported not being able to understand her accent. Furthermore, some students did not hesitate to directly point out to her what they perceived to be her shortcomings; 'Students tell me all the time that they don't understand me'.

In the following excerpt of interview data, Hua described how she was told by some of her students that another class member had made a racist comment to her. Even though Hua had heard the comment, she was not entirely sure what it meant, although she guessed it was derogatory. One of the students reprimanded Hua, 'You shouldn't let that happen in class, you should stop him, you should challenge him'. While the students appeared to find their fellow student's remark distasteful and offensive, they were not prepared to challenge him, themselves. Rather, they put the responsibility on Hua to do so, seeming to take umbrage that she had let the incident slide. Their silence at the time of the incident may have been due to a number of reasons; they may have felt powerless to challenge a peer because there may have been a complicated set of dynamics and personal relationships at stake, or they might have thought it was in Hua's interests that she speak for herself, rather than have them speak for her. Alternatively, not knowing whether Hua had heard the remark, the situation was an opportunity to bring it to her attention, and in effect, to join the campaign against her. Mazzei (2008) explains how racist injury can be inflicted through passivity and the act of remaining silent. By not challenging their fellow classmates, the students might be seen to be condoning their behaviour.

Jane reported that her professional credibility was often questioned by students. She said:

And I think the challenge for me, particularly in this institution, because it is quite prestigious, there have been sometimes students from particular backgrounds think that there is nothing you could offer them. And some of those students are also going to the trouble of 'googling' you to check you out, to check your credentials because they can't somehow reconcile that this Black person in front of them has a right to be in this institution and also has something that they can teach them.

While Jane does not identify the students as from any specific background, that she says they are from 'particular backgrounds' in a 'prestigious university', suggests that these students are white and from middle class or affluent backgrounds. Unused to having Black lecturers, and suspicious about their knowledge and qualifications, the students take the opportunity to check that Jane has the credentials to be lecturing them. In the case of Jane and Hua, being the 'wrong' kind of teacher educator appears to legitimise, and permit students to openly question their competence and legitimacy.

Jill spoke about the pressure to be 'tripleley well organised', and to ensure her colleagues knew she was efficient and 'on top of things'. 'I have to prove my worth before I even open my mouth'. Jade felt the pressure to continually perform and demonstrate competence. 'I have to be pretty good. I feel personally that when it comes to mistakes, I can't make them'. Similarly, one of the Australian respondents, Isaac, said he felt the need to 'keep showcasing' himself, not only in terms of his professional knowledge, but also in regards to his personal background. He said, 'You have to keep telling your story all the time'. He is constantly asked, often repeatedly by the same colleagues, where he comes from, what the education system is like there, what work he did there, and where he studied. The imperative to constantly 'tell his story' reminds him that he is an outsider - his hypervisibility as a Black man in the white space of academe requires that he constantly legitimise his presence. Mei reports that she felt as though she was positioned as a novice and a learner who needed to be inculcated into the ways of doing things in Australia. She believes she could bring a range of different perspectives to teacher education if her knowledge were sufficiently valued.

However, at the same time as they were hypervisible, our participants were also positioned as invisible in terms of professional status and competence. For example, Jane, recounting her experiences of going to see student-teachers on teaching placement says:

I was often mistaken for the cleaner, the supply teacher anybody but the tutor who has come to see a student in school, despite the fact that I am always professionally dressed and all that kind of stuff.

Here, Jane illustrates how as a Black person she is perceived to be out of her expected role and space. Mirza, firstly citing Ahmed (2007) then drawing on her own experience (2009, p127) writes,

first there is 'disorientation', a double-take as you enter a room, since you are not supposed to be there. You are noticed and it is uncomfortable. ... There is confusion, as you are not the 'natural expected occupant of that position'. I know this well [...] in many meetings, even though I am a professor I have been mistaken for the coffee lady!

Jill described the anxiety of being ignored at conferences or senior management meetings, and how she had to mentally and physically prepare herself prior to these events.

I think ok somebody may talk to me, somebody might not so ok I'll bring my papers, I'll bring my iPad and I can do my emails so I have all the little things I can cope with.

Having experienced sitting alone at these events in the past, Jill found ways to occupy her time during lunch and coffee breaks just in case she found herself excluded from interactions with her colleagues. Thus, if she appeared busy, she might appear less 'needy' of company and acceptance. These experiences positioned Jill as an outsider to the community of senior academic leaders. According to Puwar, it is 'through processes of historical sedimentation, certain types of bodies are designated as being 'natural' occupants of specific spaces... Some bodies have the right to belong to certain locations, while others are marked out as trespassers' (Puwar 2004, p.51 as cited in Mirza 2009). Within the elite academic space that was Jill's work place, she was a double trespasser, first, as a Black academic and second, as a Black senior manager in academe.

Joanne explained how she was the only Black African Caribbean in the School of Education at her last university. She said,

When I think about that place it is still quite emotional....it makes me very, very angry what I experienced in that place.

She went on to speak about how she had experienced a number of micro-aggressions in the form of incidents of exclusion. She recounted being made to feel invisible in the staffroom while conversations went on around her. During one of these conversations Joanne reports a



colleague saying, 'I can really see what Mosely<sup>5</sup> was on about'; and the other colleague shockingly said, 'We never should have won the War. You know the country has never been the same since'. Here, Joanne's colleague is implying that had the Facists won the Second World War, there would have been no BME immigration to Britain from the British Commonwealth, and therefore, no Black people in the country. That this was said in the presence of a Black African Caribbean person can be seen as a message to Joanne that people like her should not be living in the UK. In this way, Joanne was hypervisible in that her presence most likely prompted the discussion between her colleagues. However, at the same time, she was also invisible because her colleagues seemed to not acknowledge her presence in the staffroom, nor the effect of their comments upon her. Joanne notes she felt, 'like a cuckoo in the nest'<sup>6</sup>.

The participants, both in Australia and England, spoke about how they had fewer opportunities for career development because of workloads they perceived to be heavier than those of their white colleagues. Some likened themselves to 'workhorses' who were given large teaching loads and classes timetabled for unpopular times. For example, Isaac talks about 'persistently being scheduled for 5pm classes'. Abel feels that the undergraduate teaching in the department is reserved for him, while his white colleagues have a more balanced workload and are able to develop their academic curriculum vitae through more prestigious post-graduate teaching. Jenny felt that she was 'beaver away, largely alone' to develop her research profile against the pressure of a large teaching workload. Some may argue that heavy teaching workloads are the reality for all academics working in teacher education and are not confined to BME teacher educators. While this may well be the case in comparison to academics in other faculties and departments, our participants felt that within their departments, their teaching workloads were the heaviest and that they were positioned as tutors who were there only to teach while their white colleagues had opportunities to develop their research skills and profiles. Joanne reports being expected to undertake forty-seven visits in eight weeks to assess 48 student-teachers on practicum in school — a number far in excess of those expected of her white colleagues.

These heavy teaching and administrative workloads had implications for the career progression of our participants. James voices frustration that his career has not advanced as fast as his white colleagues, despite being in the academy for longer. He attributes this to,

... the kinds of teaching you are asked to do, the kinds of projects that you are often asked to do. You just realise that you are not one of the first names that people are going to call upon [...] So your CV tends to progress at sort of two-thirds of the speed of many of your white colleagues.

Similarly, the BME respondents in research conducted by Bhopal and Jackson (2013, p.12) reported having to show a 'track record of achievements' supported by evidence before they could progress. In comments to the Times Higher Education Supplement (Grove, 2015, p.35) Bhopal noted, 'when [BME staff] were pushed forward for promotion, they felt there was a higher threshold for them than [for] their white counterparts'. The ECU Report (2015) noted that large workloads for BME staff particularly those related to supporting BME students, for

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<sup>5</sup> Oswald Mosely was the founder of the British Union of Facsits [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/time-line/worldwars\\_timeline\\_noflash.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/time-line/worldwars_timeline_noflash.shtml)

<sup>6</sup> Someone who is an intruder

whom they felt obliged to provide pastoral support, placed an additional burden on BME academics and hampered their career progression. In addition, the Report highlights that BME staff may subconsciously be omitted from research teams since, 'People may be more likely to collaborate with those they already have a relationship with or whom they unconsciously have a preference or natural affinity with'; a phenomenon related to in-group preferences. Since the majority of academics are white, this is likely to disadvantage BME academics (ECU, 2015, p.13).

At the time of her interview, Jade had worked in higher education for twenty-three years and for many of those years she had been the only BME member of staff in her department. She said, 'I have never mapped out my career', but took 'opportunities and chances' to gain a promotion to a senior leadership position, although subsequent departmental re-structuring left her in the position of senior lecturer for many years. Expressing her reluctance to take up a recent opportunity for promotion, she said,

If I went for this role [a promotion] where would my support be?....I think, well actually, I can't do that, it's too exposed, it's too risky and I will get no support.

A new position with more responsibility seems to Jade to be too much of a risk because she believes she would be unlikely to receive support from senior colleagues. Thus, any mistakes she might make in a new position would simply increase her visibility, and therefore, her vulnerability. Such a constraint, may be regarded as self-imposed, a *choice* not to apply for promotion. However, such a 'choice' can be due to the operation of micro-aggressions and the misrecognition of institutional racism that operates to limit the career progression of BME academics.

## Discussion and Concluding remarks

In this paper we have shown that BME academics experience racism, both institutional, and everyday racism. Maybe it isn't surprising that racism exists in universities, given that universities are examples of the wider community, albeit, perceived as liberal spaces allowing free speech and different modes of being. The contradictory polarity of invisibility and hyper-visibility as a tool of whiteness (Picower 2009, Yoon 2012) has material and emotional outcomes for BME academics. However, talking about, and addressing racism within the academy is fraught with difficulties. As one of the interviewees, James says:

I think in Higher Education racism has a different hue, it's intellectualised in a different kind of way because they know they have to be fairly PC<sup>7</sup>. [...]  
It's rare that you ever do get blatant racism because people are all too knowing, too good verbally to actually indulge in that kind of thing.

Thus, the racism that exists is complex, but it must be dealt with. On the most fundamental level, the existence of racism in academe needs to be acknowledged— by individual academics— and then it must be disrupted. First, this means enabling all academics to recognise the

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<sup>7</sup> Politically correct

role they may inadvertently play in participating in, or allowing racism to occur. This means they will need to “interrogate the assumptions that underpin their beliefs and actions. This will, by necessity, require them to critique their own positioning as members of the white hegemonic ‘mainstream’” (Santoro, 2014, p. 441). Given that most academics in schools and faculties of education have been teachers, if the work of developing reflexive practitioners were to initially occur through teacher education, this would be a positive starting point. However, as one of the authors has argued elsewhere, teacher education, in general, has not been successful in facilitating student-teachers’ understandings of self and the socio-cultural discourses in which they are embedded (Santoro, 2009; 2014). Far greater effort needs to be made to be made to improve teacher education curricula and the knowledge of teacher educators in this respect.

Finally, our research has raised a number of worrying concerns about doing research with this group. Even after ethical approval was gained from the participants, an unusually high number expressed concern about being identified. For that reason, specific details of the location of the participants’ institutions are not given in this article, and in the case of the Australian participants, details of nationality have not been supplied. We also noted an unusually high number of requests from respondents to edit their transcripts after these had been returned to them for verification. One of the Australian participants withdrew from the study after her interview. In hindsight, and after the analysis of the data, we should not have been surprised by these concerns because of the vulnerability experienced by the participants in relation to their hypervisibility. Vulnerability, insecurity and precariousness is generated through their positioning as a space invader, a role they occupy not only within faculties or schools of education, but more widely within their university and in schools where their students are placed for practicum. This vulnerability is also borne from the surveillance by students and managers to which these participants are subjected, as well as the micro-aggressions and microinvalidations that reinforce their status as space invaders. Despite their personal and professional efforts to establish and maintain themselves as credible professionals, they are still positioned as outsiders within the academy. However, while the effort and pressure to maintain professional credibility is burdensome, it is necessary in order to survive continual googling by students, or being mistaken for the cleaner. So, any further threat to the precariousness of their position via exposure of their identity through this study would constitute betrayal, and increase their sense of vulnerability.

It is noteworthy that four of the English academics were in Russell group universities, the majority were also in London, an ethnically diverse city and between them they had over 70 years of experience within teacher education, yet only one of them was in a senior leadership position. The Australian academics were all lecturers, with the exception of one who was a senior lecturer. None of the participants, Australian or English, was a Reader or Professor. Whilst we acknowledge that within this group there may be different ambitions and opportunities for promotion or career advancement, and that the respondents may not have wanted to apply for promoted posts, it appears that they were positioned as teaching ‘workhorses’ and lacking in opportunity to move beyond lecturer level (Grove, 2015, p.35) As noted by Bhopal (Grove 2015) BME academics experience slower career progression. due to unconscious bias which can be recognised as the operation of whiteness that sustains and perpetuates the attendant social hierarchy which is reflected in the academy (Picower 2009, Yoon 2012, Leonardo 2015).

It is important to find ways to disrupt the everyday racism experienced by BME teacher educators. Academics, managers and policy makers need to recognise how BME academics are positioned as hypervisible and invisible in the academy and how this can shape

their work, confidence, career progression and status. Action needs to be taken at two levels: first, to educate all staff and students on the operation of unconscious bias in all aspects of institutional and everyday life and particularly about the ways in which taken for granted practices and everyday interactions can compound and perpetuate cycles of inequality; secondly, to identify and eradicate institutional practices that contribute to the lack of opportunity for the career development of BME academics. Strategies at the local and policy level need to extend beyond the mere recruitment of BME academics, to an examination and critique of the discourses that shape their experiences within the academy. In an age where most universities have an equality and diversity policy the monitoring of outcomes against such policies and the attendant goals requires action beyond the discussion of such statistics, and both national and institutional research is required into actions which will eliminate discriminatory practices. Finally, institutional commitments to equality and diversity need to be evident in tangible support for BME academics through supportive practices, such as career planning and mentoring for these staff which in turn requires subsequent monitoring to ascertain the successes of these practices that have to be underpinned by genuine commitment to equality. Given the whiteness of the teaching profession in general, there is an imperative that strategies to broaden student-teachers' understandings of the world beyond the hegemonic mainstream, include not only the diversification of the teacher education workforce but also the visible presence of BME academics in senior academic positions, thereby establishing and asserting their right to belong and reside within academe and within its hierarchy. A workplace that genuinely values, and is inclusive of BME staff, is required if we are to ensure that a diversified teacher educator workforce will prepare the next generation of teachers to teach in our increasingly culturally diverse classrooms.

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